



# G HEAVEN'S

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# The Mission



- ▶ The Cult's mission was to leave this "vehicle" (human body) behind and ascend to Heaven where the soul will get a new body
- ▶ To start to prepare themselves for their new selves they started to live a very strict regimented life
- ▶ Why? The world is going to be recycled and the only way to survive is to leave this "vehicle"

# Marshall Applewhite/Do (1)

- ▶ Born on May 1937, in Spur, Texas
- ▶ The son of a presbyterian minister
- ▶ Graduate from high school in 1948
- ▶ Briefly enrolled to study as a minister, but later changed his mind and found love for music
- ▶ Graduated from Austin College in 1952
- ▶ Married Ann Peace in 1952
- ▶ Had two children
- ▶ Spent two years in the Army Signal Corps
- ▶ He was an opera singer and a public speaker
- ▶ After failing at becoming a actor, he soon became an assistant teacher at the University of Alabama, in 1962. He served there as a choirmaster.
- ▶ He later left his job as an assistant teacher and moved back to Texas.
- ▶ He met Bonnie Nettles, and found interest in Astrology
- ▶ Created a religious cult called Heaven's Gate that drew from science fiction and scripture
- ▶ Was a self proclaimed prophet
- ▶ Died in the group's mass suicide on March 26, 1997



# Bonnie Nettles/ Ti (2)



- ▶ Born in 1927
- ▶ Was raised in a Baptist family
- ▶ Knew the Bible well
- ▶ Mother of four
- ▶ Worked as a nurse
- ▶ As Nettles grew older, she became interested in worldly pursuits
- ▶ She later divorced her husband, and traveled with Applewhite
- ▶ 1983 developed cancer
- ▶ Died in 1985 of cancer

# Applewhite and Nettles

- ▶ Applewhite met Nettles in 1972
- ▶ Believed that they were “The Two mentioned in the *Book of Revelation*”
- ▶ Both wandered around the United States months after months
- ▶ Believed that their higher callings allowed them to ignore earthly laws
- ▶ “They thought that they came from what they termed the "Level Above Human"—a physical and literal version of Heaven in outer space—and were sent to help others reach this "Next Level." To them, the human body was just a vehicle and that to ascend from this world people had to separate from all that was human in themselves, including their earthly needs and desires. They believed that a UFO would soon take them back to the Next Level after completing their mission.”
- ▶ They started calling themselves “Bo” and “Peep” and “Do” and “Ti”

# Followers Lives

- Marshall Applewhite was a skillful manipulator. He tried to get his followers as far away from reality as possible. Applewhite convinced them to leave their family's, jobs and their entire lifestyle to join him. He forbade them from any type of reality or anything that is 'earthy'. For example, there could be no relationships, media, drugs, sexuality, wearing jewelry and they could not even have any facial hair and they had to keep their hair short. Members called themselves brother and sister; they looked upon themselves as monks and nuns; they lived communally in a large, rented San Diego County (CA) home which they called their monastery. Most members had little contact with their families of origin or with their neighbors. Many followed successful professional careers before entering the group. Some abandoned their children before joining. They were free to leave at any time. They dressed in unisex garments: shapeless black shirts with Mandarin collars, and black pants. They were required to commit themselves to a celibate life. Eight of the male members, including Do (Applewhite), submitted to voluntary castration. This seems to have been a form of preparation for their next level of existence: in a life that would be free of gender and sexual activity.



# Self Serving Bias

- ▶ Marshall Applewhite along with Bonnie Nettles spread the belief that the Earth would be purified/wiped out “recycled”, so the only escape was to leave the planet. One of their main goals was to rid ones self of human indulgences, blaming a beings nature for the calamities in society. Hence the reason they believed to ascend to the New Level, they must shed these human properties and escape the Earth.



# Using Power to Influence Others

- ▶ Applewhite and Nettles lured people with low self esteem into the group
- ▶ People found his theories about UFOs interesting
- ▶ Promises of traveling frequently appealed to those who were sick of where they were



# The Peripheral Route

- ▶ Followers of the cult were very easily persuaded because they wanted to belong, feel acceptance
- ▶ The followers of Heavens Gate have very little thought into their actions because they became so brainwashed by Applewhite.

# Attraction

- ▶ Applewhite began to advertise to gain followers for his movement. Those who were interested would be promised to reach a new higher evolutionary level through the experiments they had in store
- ▶ Many were attracted because of Applewhite's outreach and his apparent contact with extraterrestrials which made those interested in UFO's that much more intrigued

# Environment

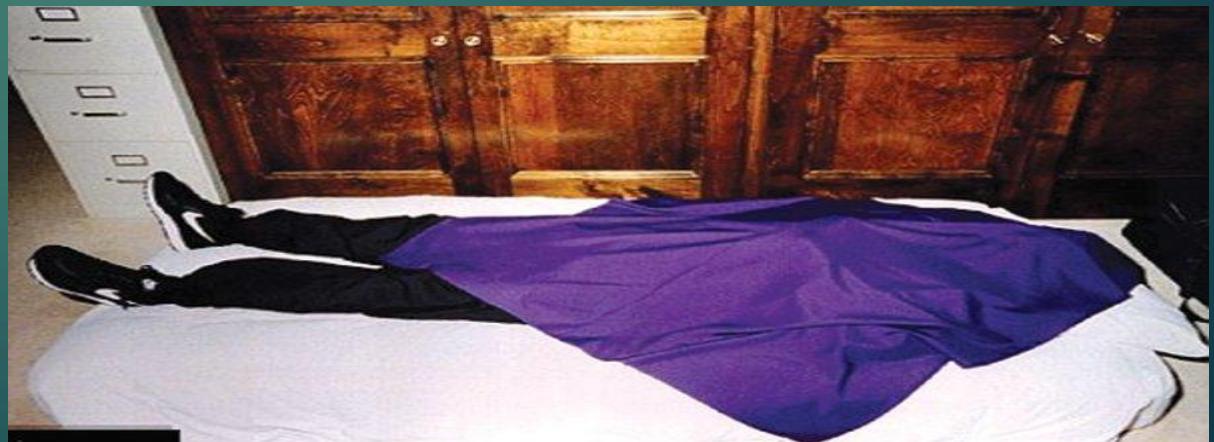
- ▶ Group members were extremely close and avoided any indulgences that were not considered part of the ascetic lifestyle
- ▶ Everything in the group was shared communally including food and other resources they had gathered
- ▶ Entire group used the computers and internet as a way of communication and a strategy to spread their beliefs
- ▶ To keep from indulging in human pleasures, several members went to Mexico to be castrated in order to maintain the ascetic lifestyle within the cult
- ▶ Under Applewhite, members showed obedience in order to fulfill the goal of going to the Next Level and detaching from all human characteristics

# Cult Life

- ▶ 15 people lived in a house at one time
- ▶ Certain people had designated times where they would leave
- ▶ Members were encouraged to detach from all human qualities
- ▶ During mundane tasks, distractions such as “a tone” were used to keep members away from human thoughts

# Social Influence

- ▶ Compliance: They were willing to give up sex, alcohol, their belongings, and smoking just to be part of the group. They gave up interactions from the outside world.
- ▶ Obedience: Staying at the mansion despite what was going on. They had the choice to leave, but never did.
- ▶ Conformity: Everyone had the same haircut and dressed the same way. When they committed suicide, their arms were at their sides, dressed in the same all black clothing, Nike sneakers, short hair, and a \$5 bill and three quarters in their pockets for interplanetary tolls.



# The Outcome

- ▶ 39 people, including Marshall Applewhite, committed suicide though barbiturates (Phenobarbital) and vodka along with affixation with a plastic bag.
- ▶ This was thought to be a three day ordeal leading up to the 26th of march when they were found. They were found by Rio Diangelo, a member that choose not to kill himself so he could explain what happened to the rest of the world.
- ▶ They believed that Ti (whom had died some years back) had come back with a spaceship, that followed the Hale Bopp comet, to bring them to the New Level



# View of Self and Others

- ▶ They believed that once they pass away their spirits will be taken by an alien spacecraft and will live in another dimension. They had nothing against anyone who was outside of their “world”, but they did not want to interact with anyone else other than the people who had the same beliefs as them.



# Bystander Effect

- ▶ Inside of the cult, it was hard to be a bystander because some of the offenses go as follow:
- ▶ “Taking action without using my check partner”
- ▶ “Keeping an offense to myself or not exposing it the same day”
- ▶ This means that if you did something wrong or if you saw something, it was part of the cult mentality that you must step out and report it.
- ▶ One might argue that their families should not have sat idly by and let them do this, but because the changed locations often and were purposefully secretive, it was hard for anyone to report anything.
- ▶ The only people that could have been seen as bystanders are the members of the cult that left it, but even then there was nothing to report.

# Social Importance and Dynamics

- ▶ The classmates and Do cut themselves off from the rest of the world, believing that having ties like family was a quality of their human vehicle and in order to prepare for their real self, they must not have human emotional ties. The social dynamic of the group was that they were all followers of Do, who was sent down by God to be their prophet. The classmates were to regulate not only themselves, but also each other. The cult seemed to have a happy demeanor.
- ▶ The real social influence is the families that were abandoned by the cult members. Children left with relatives, and families not being contacted for years. This was eye opening to the American public because it was the largest mass suicide on American soil to date.

# Group Think

- ▶ One of the most prominent goals of Applewhite and Nettles
- ▶ Members were to drop all human habits, hobbies, and traits
- ▶ Everybody was to wear baggy clothes and keep their hair short
- ▶ Sex was banned, some males (including Applewhite) had themselves castrated
- ▶ Most of what they did was focus on preparation of “graduation”

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- ▶ Main logo
- ▶ Body
- ▶ Applewhite
- ▶ Nettles